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VERSE FOR LITTLE FOLKS
AND OTHERS

EUGENE SECCR



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Verse for Little Folks and Others

By

Eugene Secor



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DEDICATED TO THE LOVERS
OF NATURE

Art Work by
Egbert Norman Clark

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No. 1

Prosy Remarks About the Author

It is for the purpose of putting some of my father's nature verse into a form in which they may be better preserved that I assemble them in this little volume. Many have appeared in different publications, and some are recorded here for the first time.

For half a century he has lived in the one spot among the trees, the flowers, the bees and squirrels. This home bears the appropriate name of "The Shelter," for it is indeed a shelter for every harmless living thing, as well as for his many friends who chance that way.

Here in the bosom of Nature, the Muse has touched the chords of his poetic soul and many are the rhymes that have emanated from "The Shelter."

ALSON SECOR

Des Moines, Ia., Dec. 1911

CONTENTS

The Wood Thrush.....	5
Mister Redhead.....	6
Robin Redbreast.....	8
The Brown Thrasher.....	10
Nesting Time.....	11
De Li 'l Ol' Owl.....	12
The First Robin.....	13
The Bobtail Rooster.....	14
Hunting Eggs.....	16
The Pumpkin-Seed Calf.....	18
The White-Faced Colt.....	20
The Mooly Cow.....	22
Baby Sheep.....	23
When the Cows Come Home.....	24
The Wabbly Calf.....	26
Mrs. Kitty Cottontail.....	28
The Red Squirrel.....	30
The Hunted.....	32
The Brindle Cat.....	33
Blind Kittens.....	34
Talking to Tabby.....	36
A Little Brown Toad.....	38
About a Bee.....	40
The Big Red Apple.....	43
When the Bees are Coming Home.....	44
To a Katydid.....	46
When Strawberries are Ripe.....	48
An Anniversary Song.....	51
A Summer Idyl.....	52
An Apple Seed.....	54
The Little Preacher.....	56
Jack Frost.....	58
A Thunder Shower.....	60
Goldenrod.....	61
Goldenrods and Asters.....	62
Blackeyed Susan.....	64



The Wood Thrush

The yellow sun is sinking low,
Tingeing the sky with mellow glow.
I hear a restful vesper hymn
Poured from a high and hidden limb.

The mate is brooding near away,
Where, through the weary, fretting
day,
She, like a prophetess, doth see
Winged music in that nesting-tree.

Who would not wait in patience long
And ply his task, if such a song,
Sung by the one he loved the best
Could cheer him in his daily quest?

That matchless strain, almost divine,
More sweetly sounds at day's decline,
When weary Nature asks surcease
From toil and care and prays for peace.

Thy speckled vest and tawny coat
Cover a tuneful, happy throat.
All day thy cadenced music flows,
But richer, sweeter at its close.

As evening comes to me may I
Sing songs of hope to passers by—
Sing till the deepening shadows fall
To Him who broodeth over all.





Mister Redhead

See the woodpecker peck that old tree!
What d'you think he is trying to do?
Digs a hole with his bill, don't you
see?—

That's his auger and small chisel, too.
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap at it early and
late,

First a breakfast of worms, then a
house for his mate.

I should think it would make his head
ache—

Or don't birds ever have such mean
things?

"They don't eat so much candy and
cake,

And feel sick when the morning bell
rings?"

R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, he is always at
work,

And the worms better "git" if they
don't like his dirk.

What a lovely white shirt front he
shows,

And his coat is as black as a crow,

But his head is as red as a rose—
Red as blood that the butcher makes
flow.

R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, like a boy with
a drum,
For he never gets tired till the even-
ing has come.

'Way up high where an old rotten
limb
Has been torn by the wind from a tree
There's the cunningest hole made by
him,
And a little red head peeps at me.
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, hear the mate
after grubs!
While one watches the nest t'other just
rub-a-dubs.

How I wish I could live in that way,
In a hole away up in a tree,
I could go where I please in the day,
And at night how the wind would rock
me!
And I'd rub-a-dub-dub, and I'd rap-a-
tap-tap
Every morning before you had finished
your nap.





Robin Redbreast

A pair of robins built their nest
Beside our cottage door,
Bro't sticks and straws with little rest,
And with much labor wove and press'd
The shapeless mass to walls and
floor
To hold the frail eggs, four.

Not such fine artists, nor so brave,
As is the oriole,
Who hangs her well-built nest to wave,
Fearless, though angry tempests rave,
But more substantial stays control
The robin's scraggy roll.

A friendly fork of sheltering tree
Is their supreme delight,
They feel that here in some degree
Is much desired security,
For dawning life is helpless, quite,
And needs maternal sight.

The mother brooded while he sang
His cheeriest notes to her—

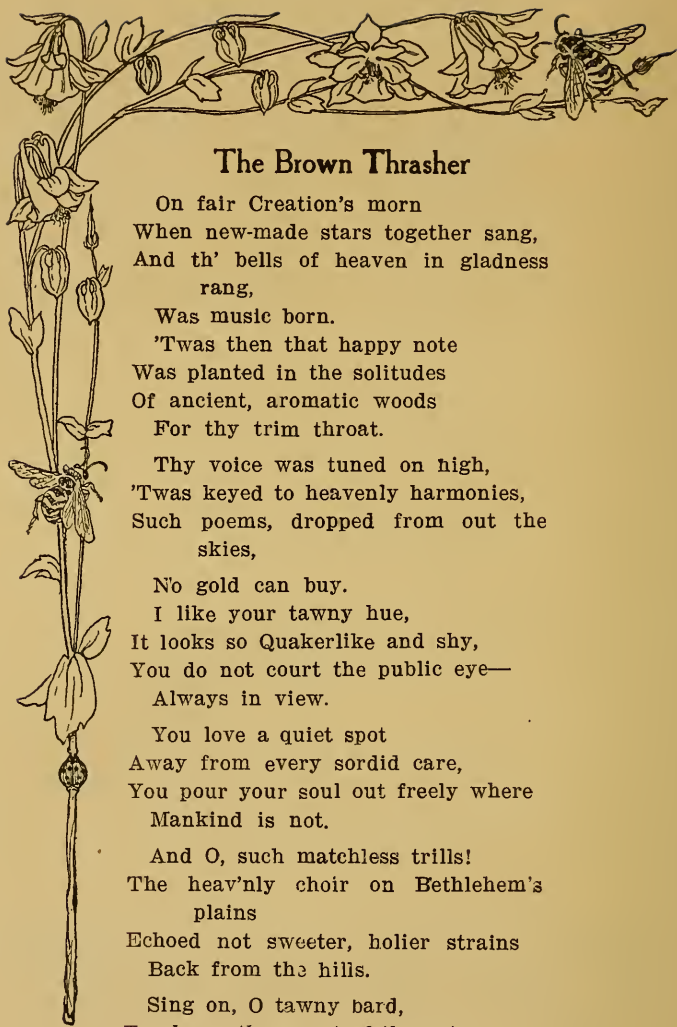
The morning with his clarion rang,
A strong, encouraging harangue.
His voice was heard from some tall
fir
Before men were astir.

A miracle was wrought one day,
Four open mouths were seen,
And then how diligent were they
The yard and garden to survey!
Many a fat worm did they glean
From out the meadow green.

Four hungry squabs to satisfy,
Four growing appetites,
Four helpless babes 'tween earth and
sky
That must be fed and taught to fly,
Defended from whatever frights
And nestled warmly nights.

What lesson may I learn from you,
Patient and faithful pair?
*Learn to be diligent and true,
Be up and brush the morning dew,
Of life's hard duties take your share,
There's blessing oft in care.*





The Brown Thrasher

On fair Creation's morn
When new-made stars together sang,
And th' bells of heaven in gladness
rang,

Was music born.

'Twas then that happy note
Was planted in the solitudes
Of ancient, aromatic woods
For thy trim throat.

Thy voice was tuned on high,
'Twas keyed to heavenly harmonies,
Such poems, dropped from out the
skies,

No gold can buy.

I like your tawny hue,
It looks so Quakerlike and shy,
You do not court the public eye—
Always in view.

You love a quiet spot
Away from every sordid care,
You pour your soul out freely where
Mankind is not.

And O, such matchless trills!
The heav'nly choir on Bethlehem's
plains

Echoed not sweeter, holier strains
Back from the hills.

Sing on, O tawny bard,
Teach me the secret of thy art,
Teach me to reach a brother's heart
Without reward.



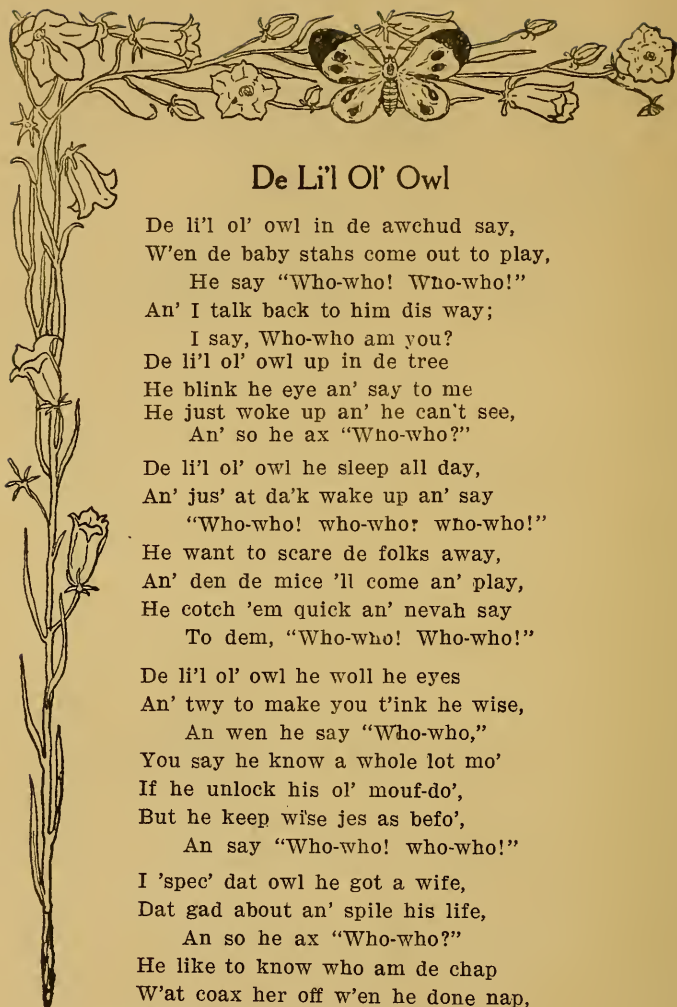
Nesting-Time

Two robins chatted in a tree
One ruddy April morning.
She talked of where the nest should
be,
Examined every limb, but he
Just sang, all labor scorning.

She carried sticks and straws, while
he
Sat on a limb above her
Splitting his throat in tuneful glee,
Watching her build in the apple-tree,
He playing lazy lover.

He thinks he's nothing else to do,
While Mrs. Redbreast's working,
But whistle loud the whole day
through,
And I don't think that's fair, do you?
It seems to me like shirking.

But maybe she is satisfied
If only he will linger
To cheer his newly-wedded bride
Whose wifely duties are her pride,
Since she is not a singer.



De Li'l Ol' Owl

De li'l ol' owl in de awchud say,
W'en de baby stahs come out to play,

He say "Who-who! Who-who!"
An' I talk back to him dis way;

I say, Who-who am you?
De li'l ol' owl up in de tree
He blink he eye an' say to me
He just woke up an' he can't see,
An' so he ax "Who-who?"

De li'l ol' owl he sleep all day,
An' jus' at da'k wake up an' say
"Who-who! who-who! who-who!"

He want to scare de folks away,
An' den de mice 'll come an' play,
He cotch 'em quick an' nevah say
To dem, "Who-who! Who-who!"

De li'l ol' owl he woll he eyes
An' twy to make you t'ink he wise,
An wen he say "Who-who,"

You say he know a whole lot mo'
If he unlock his ol' mouf-do',
But he keep wise jes as befo',
An say "Who-who! who-who!"

I 'spec' dat owl he got a wife,
Dat gad about an' spile his life,
An so he ax "Who-who?"

He like to know who am de chap
W'at coax her off w'en he done nap,
If he jes cotch her in his lap
Dah'd be de bigges' kind o' scrap—
Dat wy he say "Who-who?"



The First Robin

The larch's topmost twig is bent—
 A cradle lent
To aid his musical intent—
 And lusty is his song.
Though crisp the lucent air, the note
From out his throat
Is for despair an antidote,
 Though winter's tarried long.

Brave prophet of a better day,
 I love thy lay,
Thou see'st the greenery of May
 While yet the trees are bare.
Thy hope inspires my heart to sing,
Gives faith sure wing,
Because thy prophecy of spring
 Rebukes the chilly air.

Thou art the vanguard of a host
 Who'll charge the ghost
Of Winter with a song almost
 Before his soul has passed.
Now, if he flings his darts at me
I'll think of thee
And all thy comrades soon to be,
 And victory forecast.





The Bobtail Rooster

Old Plymouth Rock has lost his tail
And doesn't care to find it,
So long as all the hens are true
He never seems to mind it;
They like his voice the best of all
And never look behind it.

The bobtail rooster has twelve wives
A-tagging him around,
They run with haste when he begins
To scratch upon the ground.
He makes the simple hens believe
Some choice bit he has found.

And when he does unearth a worm
He wants the world to know it,
He loudly calls his harem round,
Boasting the while, to show it,
But just as they come up to eat
Himself proceeds to stow it.

And thus he fools his dozen wives
A hundred times a day,
They hang upon his idle words
Because he knows the way

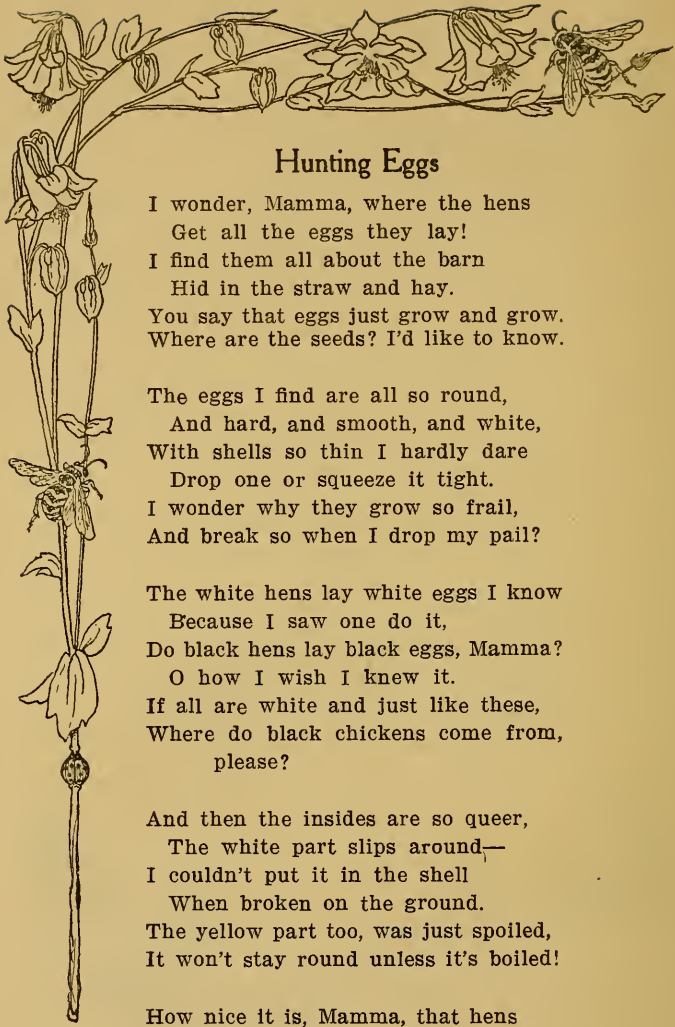
To play the lover, and to talk
And little nothings say.

The bobtail rooster knows a lot
That I would like to know;
I wonder how he tells the time
Without a clock to show.
And wakes up in the darkest night
At certain times to crow?

The bobtail rooster from the fence
Proclaims the weather fair,
But on the ground he's very sure
That rain is in the air;
If from the doorstep he shall crow,
For company prepare.

But Mr. Bobtail little knows
What soon may be his fate
When visitors that he foretells
Turn in the open gate.
Unless he hides beneath the barn
He'll grace the dinner-plate.





Hunting Eggs

I wonder, Mamma, where the hens
Get all the eggs they lay!
I find them all about the barn
Hid in the straw and hay.
You say that eggs just grow and grow.
Where are the seeds? I'd like to know.

The eggs I find are all so round,
And hard, and smooth, and white,
With shells so thin I hardly dare
Drop one or squeeze it tight.
I wonder why they grow so frail,
And break so when I drop my pail?

The white hens lay white eggs I know
Because I saw one do it,
Do black hens lay black eggs, Mamma?
O how I wish I knew it.
If all are white and just like these,
Where do black chickens come from,
please?

And then the insides are so queer,
The white part slips around—
I couldn't put it in the shell
When broken on the ground.
The yellow part too, was just spoiled,
It won't stay round unless it's boiled!

How nice it is, Mamma, that hens
Lay painted eggs for me
On Easter Sunday every year—

Just what I love to see.
They're awful pretty, but *I aint*
Been feeding them a bit of paint!

I think I'd like to have a hen
When I'm a little older.
Would she give me three eggs a day
If I went out and told her?
You say she never lays but one?
Then she must cackle just for fun!

You say she's happiest when she
works?

Well, I believe that's so,
For when you let me help keep house
I'm happier, I know.
I'm going to be like hens that lay,
And do a little every day.





The Pumpkin-Seed Calf

A farmer bought a cream machine,
A wonderful invention
To skim new milk with gasoline
And beat the Dame's intention.
He fixed it up out in the barn
With everything so handy—
"That's just a beautiful consarn,"
Quoth the farmer's wife, Mirandy.

The thing extracted all the fat
And left the milk so blue
It wouldn't tempt a hungry cat
Or anything that knew.
He fed it to a silly calf
That never knew a mother,
A pailful of the stuff 'twould quaff
And then bawl for another.

The farmer wondered why that calf
Looked like a pumpkin-seed
When it was fed six quarts an' a half
Of warm milk at a feed.
But he was slow to learn the fact
Of a needed balanced ration—

That when some factors we extract
There must be compensation.

And I have wondered oft myself
If that's why we don't grow;
We starve our souls in th' greed for
pelf,

Anxious to make a show.
We need a balanced mental food
To round out every part—
The oil of love and th' grace of God
To stimulate the heart.





The White-Face Colt

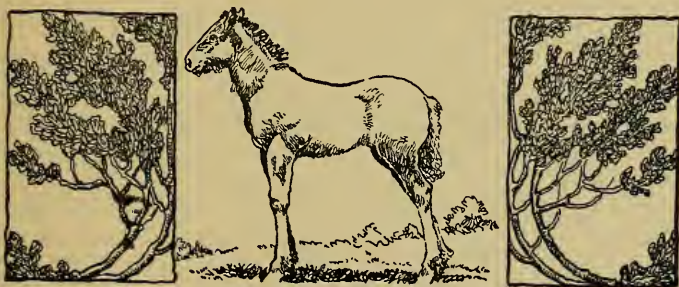
The milk-white mare is coming,
A-coming to the barn
From out the river pasture
To get a bit of corn;
And by her side is running
The cutest baby horse,
His crooked legs a-wabbling,
Bound to keep up, of course.

This colt is yellow, faded—
All but his face, that's white.
I never saw a *little* young one
All white, did you? Honor bright!
My grandpa says white horses
Are quite a common thing.
But baby colts that color
Are scarce as swans that sing.

I've heard him talk 'bout London,
And a bridge so very long
That every single minute .
White horses 're in the throng.
But if all colts are colored
I would so like to know

Where all the white *old* horses
Get coats that look like snow.

If horses, like some people,
Turn white when they grow old,
Will one that's black be younger?
Pa says, "Yes, when he's sold."
But if this white-face colty
Turns all white, I don't care,
I love him like a brother,
And we'll keep him, so there!





The Mooly Cow

We have the funniest looking cow
You ever saw, I guess,
She has no horns upon her brow
Where horns should grow, unless
Cows never care for dress.

But Papa says they never grow'd,
I'm glad of that, ain't you?
For if I met her on the road
With horns, and she said "moo,"
I don't know what I'd do.

When Papa goes at night to milk
I always want to go;
I like to feel her coat of silk
And say, "So, bossy, so!"
And see the white stream flow.

And then I hold my little cup
And Papa fills it full,
And after I have drank it up
I watch him pull and pull
Until the pail is full.

When I grow up to be a man
I'll have a mooly cow,
I'll feed her lots of corn and bran
And clover from the mow,
Like Papa's doing now.





Baby Sheep

You ought to see our little lambs,
'Bout one day old, or maybe two,
They wabble just like babies do
When they begin to walk alone,
And when their mas—pa says they're
dams—
Call, how they run, each to its
own.

If such a lamb tagged Mary round
I do not wonder children smiled,
For such a thing would set us wild
At our school house, then teacher'd
pound
The desk and say that baby sheep
Should stay at home to eat and
sleep.

One mamma sheep had two this spring,
With crooked legs and wiggly tails,
They'd follow her along the trails
And knew her voice from all the
rest.

If I could choose from everything
I think I'd like twin lambs the
best.





When the Cows Come Home

Up the lane the cows are coming,
Judith, red and large and gentle;
Jest, the roan, with eyes like chest-
nuts;

Jessie, leisurely advancing;
Janice, June and Judith's Baby,
All with heavy laden udders,
Coming from the luscious pasture,
Where the fragrance of the clover
Tempt the honey bees to gather
Nectar fit for any Eden.

Homeward from the checkered corn
fields,

Come the horses, heavy footed—
Tired and sweaty—to the stable.
Long the day has been and arduous,
Weeds have perished by the million,
And the corn is stretching upward
Toward the sun for his warm kisses—
God and man in combination
Daily working miracles.

Hear the Quaker-vestured catbird
Pouring forth his evening ditty
From the untrimm'd roadside hedge-
row,

Like a trained, accomplished singer,
While his little wife is listening
From her hidden habitation,
Where she guards five helpless nest-
lings—

Holding care a sacred duty.

See the tireless chimney swallows,
Sailing low in search of insects—
Swiftly skim the very treetops!
Thus it is life pays the forfeit,
"Feed the fittest," says Dame Nature,
"And preserve the rightful balance."
Carrying out the fatal mandate,
Pestering flies and speared mosquitoes
Are converted into feathers,
Glossy feathers, full of twitter.

Come up Judy, leave the clover,
Leave the scented mellilotus.
Bees are flying slowly homeward,
Flying homeward, honey laden;
Come, my gentle, large-eyed Josie,
Come and yield your creamy surplus.
O, the wealth of clover pastures,
That produce both milk and honey,
Type of plenty that was promised
In the fertile land of Canaan!

Hushed the sounds of rural labor;
John comes in to see the skimming
And the shapely arms of Mary
As she deftly plies the skimmer.
Sweeter is her smile than clover,
Sweeter voice has she than catbird's
Singing in the roadside hedges,
Gentler are her ways than Judith's—
Queen of all the gentle Shorthorns,
Swifter she in loving service
Than the glossy chimney swallow
Darting after speared mosquitoes,
And her welcome home is stronger
Than the daily calls of hunger.



The Wabby Calf

To our red barn there came last night
The cutest thing I ever saw,
I wish you could have seen the sight,
A baby calf hid in the straw.

The mama cow said "Mo-o"
When we went out to see her baby,
She was afraid we wanted to
Take it away and keep it, maybe.

And then it tried to run about
As if to show us it was sry,
Its legs, though wobbled in and out
Like willow canes before they're dry.

My papa said some men he knew
Were just as wabbly as that calf,
I don't know what he meant, do you?
But mama did—it made her laugh.

To think that anything so young
Can walk at all's what stumps me so,
For baby Grace can't race among
The rest of us, and she's most two.

And mama says that wabbly calf
Will be a cow and give us cream
In 'bout two birthdays and a half—
How very odd it all does seem!

For I'll be then a little girl
A-learning how to read and spell,
Not half as big as sister Pearl,
And bossy giving milk to sell!

I guess when I'm as tall as Ma
The wabbly calf will be real old.
And 'fore I know as much as Pa
I'm 'fraid the darling will be sold.





Mrs. Kitty Cottontail

Out in the orchard, close by an old tree
Lived a shy little mother with her babies three;
In a bed of dry grasses and soft, brown leaves
She hid them away from the boys—
little thieves
Who would rob Mrs. Kitty
Of her babies so pretty
And carry them home for their sisters
to see.

They grew every day, those wee babies three
Hid under the roots of that old apple tree,
And soon they were playing and running alone,
And nibbling the clover the farmer had sown.

But not far from home
Did they dare to roam,
For bad boys and dogs were the dread
of the three.

Mrs. Cottontail wears a handsome grey suit—
Warm in winter, cool when summer yields her fruit—
So like the grey leaves of the woods in the fall
That she'd be unnoticed except for the ball
Of conspicuous white

She has always in sight—
A brief invitation to gunners to shoot.

One winter the ground was all covered
with snow,
And tracks in the orchard were found
looking so (:·) —

A colon ahead and a period behind—
A thumb and two fingers will call it to
mind.

Mrs. Kitty was out
For a lark, without doubt,—
Three tracks with four feet, a trick
they all know.

I once knew a boy who tried to do
right,
But he set a steel trap for a rabbit
one night,
Next morning a poor, little, innocent
thing
With broken hind legs as limp as a
string
Was struggling and bleeding,
Her frightened eyes pleading,
And for weeks he saw them when his
were shut tight.





The Red Squirrel

There's a little red squirrel I see ev-
ery day

In the trees by our house.

He's the liveliest thing in the world I
should say,

And he jerks his long tail in the fun-
niest way—

And he's sleek as a mouse!

In the fall he is busy as busy can be

Gathering acorns to keep,

And if he cannot find a decayed hollow
tree

Where the roof doesn't leak and the
boys cannot see,

Builds a nest for his heap.

A great basket of leaves in a tree up so
high

Makes one dizzy to look,

There he sleeps in a bed that is both
warm and dry

When the weather is cold, and the
snow fills the sky—

With no breakfast to cook.

Now he grabs a black walnut between
his two paws,
And he twirls it around
Till he finds where the shell is the
thinnest, then gnaws
A smooth hole just as tho' the most
perfect of saws
The young rascal had found.

But I wonder who taught little bunny
to store
The ripe nuts for his lunch?
How does he know that winter is com-
ing for sure,
When he never saw snow or cold
weather before,
Nor ripe acorns to munch? .





The Hunted

Hello, Mister mule-eared Rabbit,
Whither going friend, on the run?
Do you leap so just from habit,
Or, think you, I have a gun?
Brother Rabbit, wait a minute,
If a race you want, I'm in it.

Let's run off into the bushes
Where the catbird pipes his song,
Where the grosbeaks and the thrushes
Trill like madcaps all day long.
They'll not be afraid of me
If I'm in your company.

Who can tell how many lessons
In the awful school of blood
It requires to leave impressions
With our neighbors of the wood?
Eyes and ears and quivering frame
Speak for bunny to our shame.

But, my timid, hunted brother,
You are not the only game,
Men are shooting at each other,
Pouncing on the weak and lame.
Everybody's studying war,
Peasant, priest and emperor.

Business, politics, society—
All have loaded guns about;
Even from the Mount of Piety
Comes full many a crack and shout.
Brother Rabbit, you're but one
'Mong the hosts that die—or run.



The Brindle Cat

"Me-ow! me-ow!" the brindle cat
Is calling at the door,
"I've had enough," she says, "of rat,
And now want something more;
A little milk, if it's about,
To take the rat taste out."

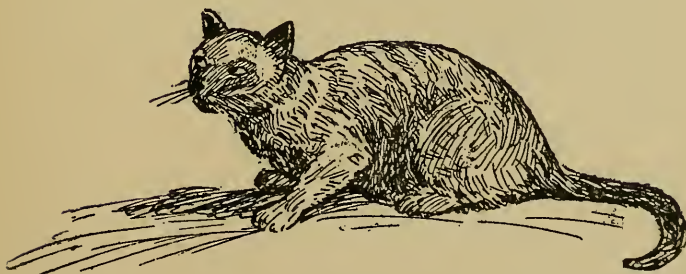
The brindle cat says naught but "me-
ow"—

The only word she knows—
A word that seems to tell somehow
All her delights and woes.
(All words are empty sounds unless
Some feeling gives them stress.)

The brindle cat is cousin to
The screechowl, I believe.
Sometimes she cries the whole night
through

And dodges all we heave,
And this one word makes all the row—
Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!

But when she's lying on the rug
Contented as can be,
She sleeps and snores without a drug
Or any soothing tea,
And if one gently strokes her now
She'll softly answer, "me-ow."





Blind Kittens

We found one day
Out in the hay
Four kittens with their eyes
Shut tight,
Although 'twas light
And long, long past sunrise.

I said, "Grand'pa, they're fast asleep,
An' I will go tiptoe, an' keep
Real still,
Lest they awake
An' cry an' make
Their mamma ill."

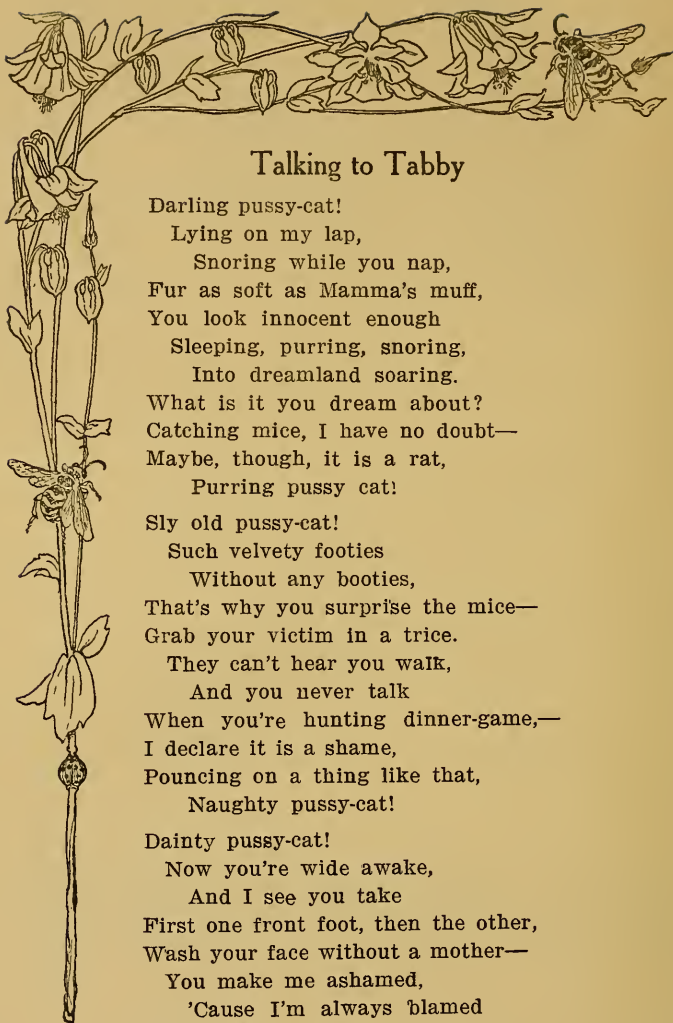
But grand'pa, he is wise.
He said young kittens' eyes
Stay shut all day;
An' when I asked the reason why,
He said it was God's way
To make 'em sharp bye 'n bye.
An' then he thought some more 'an
said
That kittens when they're cats

Always see straight, an' thats
A thing in which they are ahead
Of us, he said, because we don't
See things we ought to—or we won't,
An' then we often blindly miss
The path to happiness.

My gran'pa knows a lot
That's awful hard for me,
But when I'm big as like as not
I'll be as wise as he.

One, two, three, four—
To each I pointed
Till they were counted
And laid out on the floor.
One looked like dirty coal,
One white, all but it's tail,
Two spotted—and all frail—
That makes my kitten roll.
My brother calls them scrubs,
But I don't care,
They're just as nice as Teddy cubs,
So there!





Talking to Tabby

Darling pussy-cat!

Lying on my lap,
Snoring while you nap,
Fur as soft as Mamma's muff,
You look innocent enough
Sleeping, purring, snoring,
Into dreamland soaring.

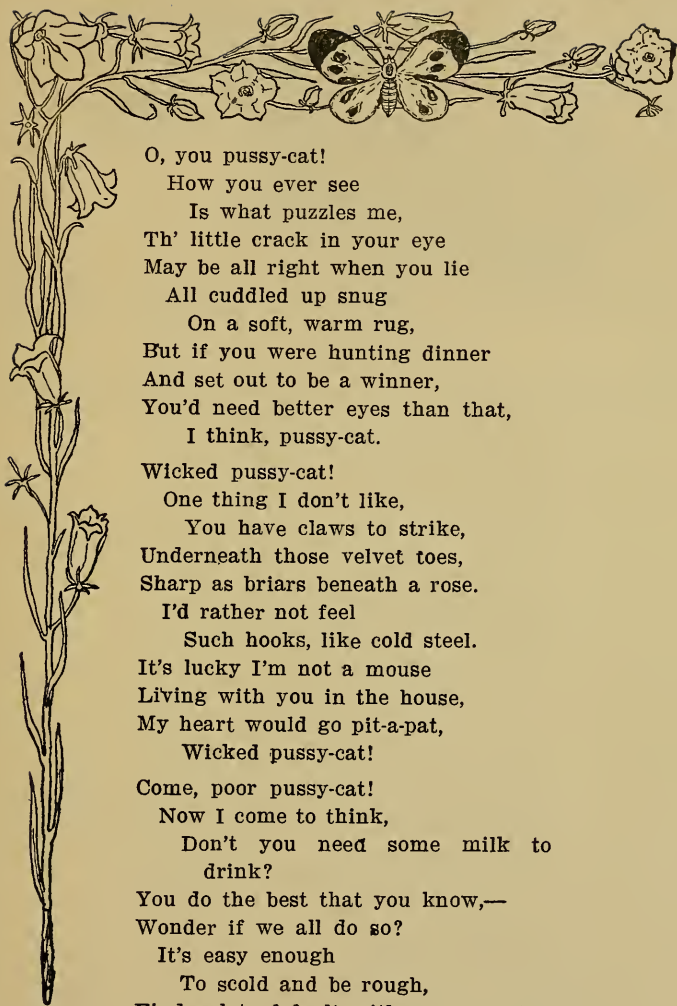
What is it you dream about?
Catching mice, I have no doubt—
Maybe, though, it is a rat,
Purring pussy cat!

Sly old pussy-cat!

Such velvety footies
Without any booties,
That's why you surprise the mice—
Grab your victim in a trice.
They can't hear you walk,
And you never talk
When you're hunting dinner-game,—
I declare it is a shame,
Pouncing on a thing like that,
Naughty pussy-cat!

Dainty pussy-cat!

Now you're wide awake,
And I see you take
First one front foot, then the other,
Wash your face without a mother—
You make me ashamed,
'Cause I'm always blamed
When I fail to wash my face,
An' smooth my hair into its place—
You've no one to tell you that,
Clean-faced pussy-cat!



O, you pussy-cat!
How you ever see
Is what puzzles me,
Th' little crack in your eye
May be all right when you lie
All cuddled up snug
On a soft, warm rug,
But if you were hunting dinner
And set out to be a winner,
You'd need better eyes than that,
I think, pussy-cat.

Wicked pussy-cat!
One thing I don't like,
You have claws to strike,
Underneath those velvet toes,
Sharp as briars beneath a rose.
I'd rather not feel
Such hooks, like cold steel.
It's lucky I'm not a mouse
Living with you in the house,
My heart would go pit-a-pat,
Wicked pussy-cat!

Come, poor pussy-cat!
Now I come to think,
Don't you need some milk to
drink?
You do the best that you know,—
Wonder if we all do so?
It's easy enough
To scold and be rough,
Find a lot of fault with you
When we've better things to do,—
You do what God set you at,
Pa says, pussy-cat!



A Little Brown Toad

Hippety-hop, little toad,
Why do you stop in the road?
Waiting for me to talk with?
Four little feet to walk with,
Four little legs to race with,
Enough to run any place with.
Why do you sit on the ground
While I am skipping around,
Happy with only two feet?
And I can easily beat

 You with your four, little toad.
What makes you blink, little toad?
Sunshine too bright in the road?
You'd rather sit in the shade
Maybe, where eyes never fade.
Couldn't catch flies in the light,
Could you, were the sun very bright?

 What do you think, little toad?
You have no teeth, little toad,
Can't bite me hard, if you would.
How do you manage your food?
Mamma tells me it's not good,
Eating things whole as you do.
But, if 'twere worms, I'd want to,
 Indeed I would, little toad.

Since you can't bite, little toad,
Good thing for you your warts grewed;
No one likes them very well;
Dogs, even, drop you and yell,
Just as they would if you bit,
So you are safe when you sit
Under a leaf to get rest,
So I am sure warts are best—

Yes, best for you, little toad.

How many toes, little toad?
Shouldn't have guessed, but you
showed

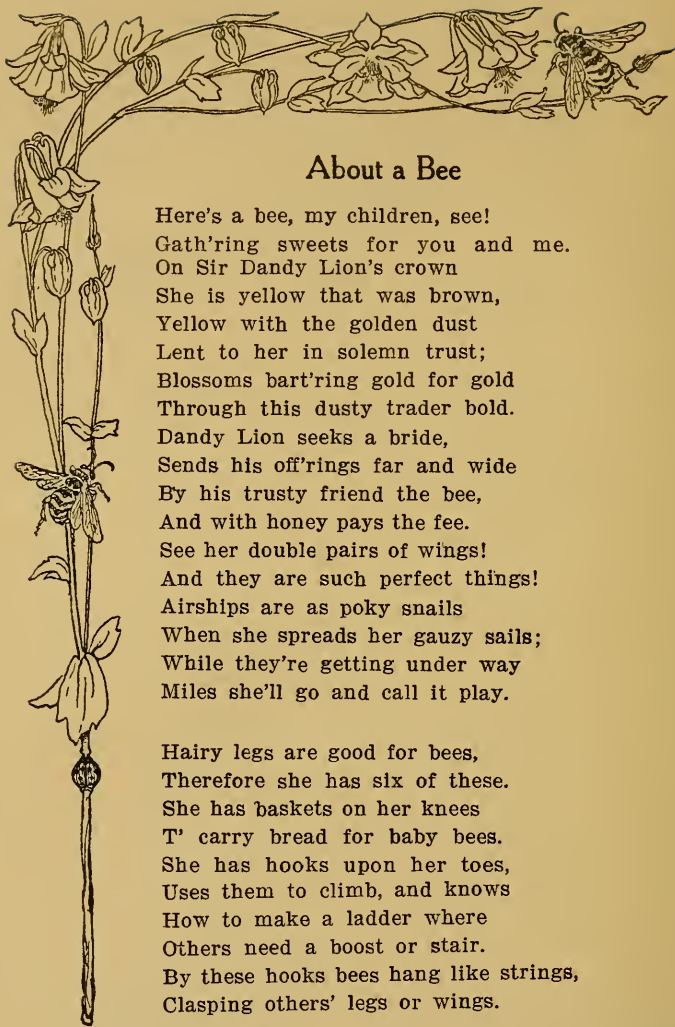
Eight toes in front, ten behind.
Thanks for the sight. You are kind.
Why more behind than in front?
Hind legs must suffer the brunt
When there's hard toad work to do,
So I've been told; is it true?
Hope toads never sucked the thumb,
Stunting it till it didn't come—

Hope that isn't so, little toad.

Where did you stay, little toad,
When it was cold and it snowed?
Under some leaves, so I heard,
Slept till the song of a bird
Told you 'twas time to come out
And see what folks were about.
When you have found the right spot,
Nearby in our garden plot,
Hide every worm, every bug,
Inside your little brown jug—

Pa says you will, little toad.





About a Bee

Here's a bee, my children, see!
Gath'ring sweets for you and me.
On Sir Dandy Lion's crown
She is yellow that was brown,
Yellow with the golden dust
Lent to her in solemn trust;
Blossoms bart'ring gold for gold
Through this dusty trader bold.
Dandy Lion seeks a bride,
Sends his off'rings far and wide
By his trusty friend the bee,
And with honey pays the fee.
See her double pairs of wings!
And they are such perfect things!
Airships are as poky snails
When she spreads her gauzy sails;
While they're getting under way
Miles she'll go and call it play.

Hairy legs are good for bees,
Therefore she has six of these.
She has baskets on her knees
T' carry bread for baby bees.
She has hooks upon her toes,
Uses them to climb, and knows
How to make a ladder where
Others need a boost or stair.
By these hooks bees hang like strings,
Clasping others' legs or wings.

See her suck the honey up
From Sir Dandy Lion's cup!

Could you see her hollow tongue
You'd imagine she is young,
Sucking "lemo" through a straw—
"Finest drink you ever saw?"
Yes, but hers is ready made,
And beats any lemonade,—
Sugar'd just to suit her taste,
Is it strange that she makes haste?
She'll go home and tell the rest
That she's Dandy Lion's guest,
That he fills the golden cup
Ev'ry time she drinks it up.
If you had a tongue like that
Wouldn't you throw up your hat?

Notice those two prongs in front,
They're put there so she won't bunt
'Gainst her ma some moonless night
When the stars are out of sight,
She just *feels* her way along
Through the dark, and midst the
throng.

Feelers take the place of hands,
When she meets her dearest friends
Reaches out as if to say
"Howdy do! art well today?"
Some wise men think they're her ears,
(*Feels* the sound instead of hears).
These same wise men say she smells
All the fragrant lily bells,
All the clover-fields in bloom,
And the linden's choice perfume
Through these horn-like antennae—
Useful, aren't they, to the bee?

But, you say, she has a sting
That is not a pleasant thing.
Yes, but roses, too, have briers,
And too many fond desires
Have a stinger at the end.
Sometimes *we*, too, sting a friend.
Shall we then demand of her
All the virtues when *we* err?
Stingers are for self defense
'Gainst attempts of violence.
We, too, may defend our homes
'Gainst whatever evil comes.
She, like us, will sometimes use it,
Sometimes in her heat abuse it,
Never saying "Please excuse it,"
But *she* seldom fails to lose it,
We may sting and sting again
Tho' our friends are dead with pain.
Stingers, children, are all right
When they don't appear in sight.





The Big Red Apple

An apple hung upon a limb,
A big, red apple, round and trim,
The stem that held it was so slim
I wondered why it didn't fall.

What made the apple blush so red?
Why wasn't it white or green in-
stead?

Did Mr. Sun shine on its head
When it had lost its parasol?

Perhaps it wants to go and see
Some clever folks like you and me.
It's tired, maybe, of this old tree,
And dresses ready for a ride.

For all the people that I know
Will pick the red ones when they go
To visit friends; they want to show
The big red apples far and wide.





When the Bees are Coming Home

'Tis evening: Day has folded its tired
wings
To rest, fann'd by the scented southern
breeze;
And homeward fly the prudent honey-
bees
To join their happy sisters 'neath the
trees,
Content if some sweet gain their la-
bor brings.

The fragrant grass is cushion'd seat
for me,
And in my lap the head of soft brown
hair
That once my heart entangled, lying
there—
More youthful then, but not more
dearly fair—
And sweet her lips as nectar sipt by
bee.

"What fools we mortals be!" We fume
and fret

Because of life's unceasing round of
toil,
Permitting gold our happiness to spoil,
When love and service are the holy oil
That blesses all the wealth we need
to get.

The soft, low hum that falls upon our
ears
As darkness creeps upon the glowing
west,
Is labor's song proclaiming that the
best
Of all that's good is found through
daily quest—
And duty leaves no time for useless
tears.



To a Katydid



Touch your lute-strings, Katydid,
 Silent sits your love a-listening,
 But she cannot play or sing,
 Neither lute has she nor string,
So she makes believe she's hid,
Serenader Katydid.

Don't you get a little tired?
 But, perhaps she lifts a blind,
 Slyly peeping from behind—
 Telling you that she *does* mind—
Makes you think that you're inspired,
Then you never dream you're tired.

Why's your frock coat always green?
 Ah, I think that I can guess,
 Colored like the leaves your dress
 Will be noticed, maybe, less;
Then while you are all unseen
Tune your lute-strings for the e'en.

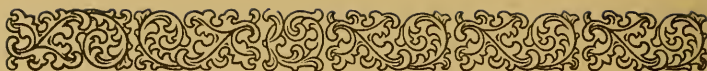
Lovers always love the night,
 Darkness makes the lover bold,
 Lovers meet when the day is old

And turn the moonbeams into gold.
Neighbor Katydid, you're right,
Other lovers love the night.

Other lovers, too, are mute
Just like you when courting's done—
Sweeter words when love's begun
Than when love is surely won.
A few brief nights you press your suit,
Then you put away your lute.

Neighbor Katydid, *we* play
Making love a little longer,
We're a little larger, stronger;
You may die a little younger,
We but stay our little day,
Then *we're* housed in friendly clay.





When Strawberries are Ripe

The morning's as fresh as a dew-span-
gled rose,

O come where the strawberries grow;
Come, drink of the wine which is
poured out for those

Who witness the first ruddy glow
Far in the east:—

Come, then and feast—

The garden is red with the best fruit
that grows.

When strawberries ripen, how green
are the trees!

What odors the clover sends forth!
How swift to the hives fly the sweet-
laden bees!

How fragrant the sensuous earth!

Come, ere it's late,

The strawberries wait

Your loving embrace, as you fall on
your knees.

When strawberries ripen, and young
lips are red

As the sunrise that tinges the east,
Come early, my Love, to the straw-
berry bed

Where beauty invites to the feast.

Ripe strawberries,

Like lovers' kisses,

Are lucious when plucked ere the
morning be fled.

The robin is calling her young to the
spot,

And scolds us for bothering her so;
She fears not our presence, for never
a shot

Has echoed to scare her, altho'

She claims some toll—

Please don't say she stole

Because she takes pay for the songs
you've forgot.

A month has gone by since, both morn-
ing and eve.

Her mate has regaled us with song;
At peep o' the day and until the night,
we've

Been cheered by his notes; and among
The garden rows

Where lurk our foes,

How many fat worms he's assisted to
leave!

The cat-bird and grosbeak, the brown-
thrush and jay,

(Every eve, in strawberry time)

All coax, in full chorus, the swift fly-
ing day

To tarry and list to their chime.

O, blessed songs

Of the feathered throngs

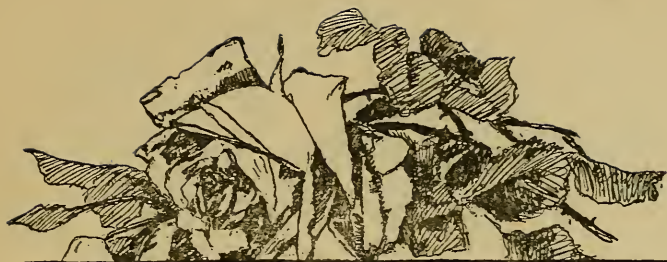
That lure anxious hearts from all
worry away!

When Bossie is milked and the full-
brimming pail

Suggests some nice cream for the mor-
row,
We'll heap the pan high with ripe ber-
ries, and mail
A note to some friends in the borough
To be our guests
When the purpling west's
Aglow with Sol's fire—and they'll
come without fail!

When strawberries ripen, the warm
changeable skies—
Now smiling, now weeping by turns—
Remind one of woman, whose win-
someness lies
In tears or in fervor that burns,
But changeable days,
Nor her moodful ways,
Can lessen the charms of my Love's
bonny eyes.





An Anniversary Song

A flame is on the golden-rod,
It lights up every lane,
A joy is in my heart again—
And both are gifts of God.
The golden-rod was bright that day
When we as lovers plighted—
When we as lovers were united
Beneath its golden spray.

Sunshine got tangled in the flower
And lingers with it fain,
And sunshine lights love's golden
chain
That binds us in our bower;
And sunshine glints along the road
Of life, with love along,
And strains of golden-noted song
Have blest our joint abode.

The golden-belted honey bee
Brings golden harvest home
To store in golden honeycomb—
Her well-earned golden fee;
So when the golden beauties nod,
And love is sweet and true,
I bless the Father for these two,—
For thee and golden-rod.



A Summer Idyl

I hear a rustle in the corn
Along the checkered rows,
And every day new-born
I mutter "How it grows!"
I hear a whisper,—listen!
Leaf unto stalk, says, "Hasten!
Don't dally in the sun,
You have a lot of work to do
Before the summer's done,
And I'll help, too."

The leaves in chorus say:
"Oh hang your dusty banners out,
Ye stalks, where breezes play
At match-making each day
Till wedding bells ring out."
The silken ears, too, hear the shout
And long to give the bride away.

I hear of plans the corn is making—
A whispered scheme to see
The world outside, forsaking
The pent-up field for liberty.
Each ear is planning to put on
Its richest colored suit,

To ride the briny seas upon.
And the kings of earth salute.

I hear the gossip of the corn,
It claims its kin is royal-born,
And when it travels far
By ship or car,

It goes to meet the high-born sons
Of other lands, where skies
Are kind, but Maize pines and dyes—
As pines the maid whom faithless lover
shuns.

The Shorthorn steer just shakes his
sides
A-listening to the talk,
For well he knows that if it rides
He doesn't need to walk.
And if to merry England goes
A cargo from the checkered rows,
He'll carry to his native shore,
In juicy sirloins, bushels more.

The Poland China smiles
To hear the corn a-whispering,
And he begins to sing—
For thought of eating oft beguiles
The greedy into smiles.
But all the virgins in the patch
Are anxious to be wed,
And gossip long about the catch,
And each prospective match,
As if no one were listening,
But I heard what was said.





An Apple Seed

K.L.E



This small brown Sphinx
Which I hold in my hand,
It came from out the orchard's best;
A little child may eat and crush
The splendid miracle that links
It to a purpose planned,
Or, I may gently push
It 'neath the soft, warm mould and
test

Its worth with little toil
In God's alembic, genial soil.

Who knows but in this tiny shell
Lies, sleeping, some creation new
That's destined to outlast
The monuments upreared to tell
Where Mammon moulders 'neath the
dew

When titled wealth has passed?
No marvel on this big, round earth
Is greater than its birth.

Could I but read
The mighty secrets locked
In one brown seed
I think I'd know the Power that
rocked

The cradle of the world when young;
I'd know the thoughts of God
As angels know, who long have trod
The heavenly hills among.

This curious elf leads fancy out
To scented orchards pink with bloom,

To wild birds' nesting-ways,
Where childhood's gleeful shout
Speaks joy that's woven in the loom
Of hope, whose cheerful shuttle plays
In hearts on life's spring days.





The Little Preacher

If I could talk
In such an earnest way
As our old kitchen clock—
And make the people hear
At all times of the year—
I think I'd be a preacher.
It stands up straight, and I hear it say
To every human creature:

"I never waste
A minute in a day,
And yet I never haste,
But tick and tick away
Until they mind my rule.
I tell them when to go to bed
And when to rise
If they'd be wise.

I tell the kitchen maid
Just when to ring the bell
For breakfast, and I tell
The children not to be too late,
For if they are as sure as fate
They'll lose their grade at school.

"I tell folks when to take the train
To go abroad and home again.
The dinner's called
At my command.
All seem to understand

My tick-tack talk
And fingers pointing at some present
duty
In my old-fashioned way.
They dare not balk.
Looking square in my face each day,
Altho' it is no beauty.
And I am getting old."

The old clock says: "Keep doing,
Don't stop, but keep pursuing.
The trees don't grow full size
In one short day before your eyes.
But day and night they keep a-grow-
ing.

A little work done every minute
Grows like a cake with soda in it."

If I could talk
Like that old clock
I, too, would be a preacher
And lecture every thinking creature.





Jack Frost

You sly old chap,
I wonder where you stay
When summer's on the hill and plain,
And the golden sun makes golden
grain!

Then, where's your home, I pray?
Where do you nap?

I think I know,
You spend the summer where
The iceberg comes from, and the seal
Grows fur for ladies' necks genteel,
Where lives the polar bear
And Eskimo.

Your trusty steed,
The ready, swift Northwind
Is mounted when you travel south,
An ice cream breath comes from your
mouth,
You leave white tracks behind
As south you speed.

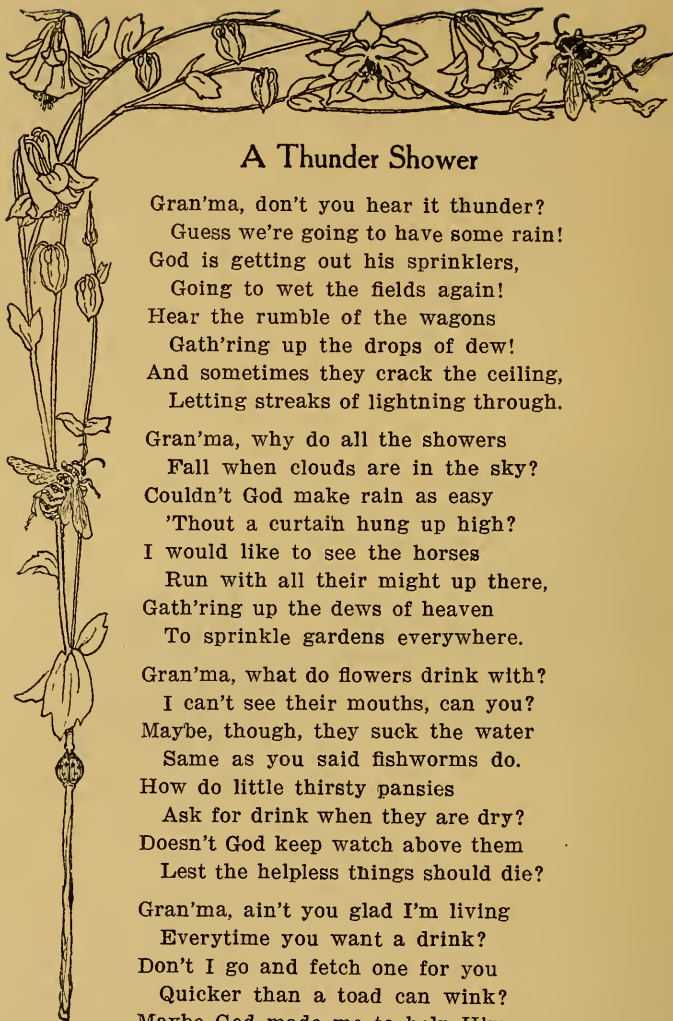
You stopt one night
To draw some pictures on
Our kitchen windows that were fine,
You drew a Norway spruce and pine
Like those upon our lawn—
All done in white.

You bridged the lake
With crystal fields of ice

In time for Christmas holidays,
And schoolboys voted you loud praise
For making things so nice
Just for their sake.

I hardly know
Which time I like the best,
The winter, with its ice and snow,
Or summer when to the woods I go
And picnic with the rest,—
I hardly know.





A Thunder Shower

Gran'ma, don't you hear it thunder?
Guess we're going to have some rain!
God is getting out his sprinklers,
Going to wet the fields again!
Hear the rumble of the wagons
Gath'ring up the drops of dew!
And sometimes they crack the ceiling,
Letting streaks of lightning through.

Gran'ma, why do all the showers
Fall when clouds are in the sky?
Couldn't God make rain as easy
'Thout a curtain hung up high?
I would like to see the horses
Run with all their might up there,
Gath'ring up the dews of heaven
To sprinkle gardens everywhere.

Gran'ma, what do flowers drink with?
I can't see their mouths, can you?
Maybe, though, they suck the water
Same as you said fishworms do.
How do little thirsty pansies
Ask for drink when they are dry?
Doesn't God keep watch above them
Lest the helpless things should die?

Gran'ma, ain't you glad I'm living
Everytime you want a drink?
Don't I go and fetch one for you
Quicker than a toad can wink?
Maybe God made me to help Him
Do a lot of little things,
Just as dew-drops cheer the pansies
And small rain-drops feed the
springs.



Goldenrod

When the northern autumn's near
And the hazy atmosphere
Mellows with the orchard fruit,
And the cricket plays his lute,
By the roadside, beckoning, nod
Stalks of queenly goldenrod.

Bob-o-links that nest in June,
Making love in merry tune,
All have put their music by,
Now their note is but a cry,
But the tasseled goldenrod
Waves its plumes and praises God.

All the gladness of the spring
Voiced in all the birds that sing,
All of summer's sunny days,
Harvest-time with yellow sprays—
All with golden sandals shod
Bringing gifts for goldenrod.

Thus are Heaven's richest gifts
Saved for those who wait, and rifts
Radiant with the sun of hope
Light and cheer life's western slope—
As the autumn goldenrod
Crowns the year—a gift from God.



Goldenrods and Asters

I like the hardy crocus
That smiles on April mornings
While here and there a snowbank
Wets with its tears the mold.
I like the daring scillas
That steal the blue of heaven,
And, spite of chilly weather,
Their azure flags unfold.

I like the dandelion
That flaunts her yellow banners
When skies are bright with promise
That fair will be the day.
I like the single tulips
Whose waxen doors fly open
Inviting bees to banquet
In hopeful, sunny May.

But these are like some people
That only smile in sunshine,
And when comes cloudy weather,
Or sudden pall of night,
They pull their wraps about them,
They curtain every window

And shut the doors to visitants
They loved when days were bright.

But goldenrods and asters
That flame on every hillside
And nod in every valley
Are open night and day.
They're like true friends that never
Shut up their hearts, or waver
When sudden dark disaster
O'ertakes us on our way.





Blackeyed Susan

I know a stately prairie lass
That nods a greeting when I pass
A-near her meadow home;
But such a maid of th' sun is she,
She only beckons unto me
When harvest days are come.

Full many a month I pass her place
And never see the winsome face
That tempts me to alight;
But when the fervor of July
Reveals the miss to passer-by,
She captivates me quite.

Bright yellow ribbons, worn with
grace,
Increase the beauty of her face
Smiling among the green.
I press her to my heart and say
"I've watched for thee for many a day,
My black-eyed Prairie Queen."

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